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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL, ETHNIC,
RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by Pax Christi International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

[5 February 1992]

Violation of the human rights of the Kurds

1. Further to previous communications submitted to the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights, Pax Christi International wishes to present the following considerations and requests.

2. In Turkey, the President and the new Government have introduced measures improving the cultural position of the Kurdish people. These measures would include: allowing Kurdish to be spoken in public (not in public buildings), Kurdish music to be played and recorded and newspapers in Kurdish to be published. Later, the teaching of the Kurdish language would be admitted on a private basis, i.e. outside the official curriculum and privately financed.

3. Even if these measures do materialize, they do not grant the Kurdish people in Turkey cultural rights on the same level as the Turkish population. Moreover, Kurds are still not allowed to establish Kurdish organizations or institutions. As a people they do not enjoy any economic rights or civil liberties.

4. In the Kurdish provinces, the discretionary powers of the "supergovernor" have been maintained along with the derogation of several important provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. Arbitrary arrests and mass detention of Kurds suspected of giving support to a Kurdish party or movement are continuing. What is worse are the numerous attacks by unidentified persons on prominent Kurdish citizens. The competent Turkish authorities provide a cover-up, deny any responsibility and refuse serious investigation into such murder cases as that of Mr. Ved at Aydin in July 1991. Instead, peaceful popular protests, even at funeral processions, are quelled by person-directed shootings and mass arrests. Meanwhile, the numerous activities by the military (police) against the Kurdish population that contravene human rights provisions including inter alia, forced deportations, destruction of property, torture and killings, go officially unpunished.

5. In Iraq, the Government perpetrated countless violations against human rights when the Iraqi army retreated from, then returned to the Kurdish provinces in March-April 1991. A report on human rights violations in Iraq is now in preparation by the Special Rapporteur. It should be noted that the Kurdish population of the areas that are under Government control is still subject to the same violations of human rights as described in our earlier document. Furthermore, the Iraqi army refuses to allow back tens of thousands of Kurdish citizens who fled these areas and now want to return to their property in, for example, Kirkuk province, Mosul (Duhok-Nineva province) and Khaneqin.

6. It should also be underlined that the economic blockade of the Kurdish area controlled by the Iraqi Kurdistan Front in northern Iraq deprives the local population of all goods and services necessary for its survival. This in itself is in contradiction to objective human rights principles and the obligations of the Iraqi Government under the Charter of the United Nations.

7. In the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, failure to respect the rights of Kurds and the consequent violations of human rights continue.

8. Pax Christi International is, as before, convinced that human rights violations in the four countries mentioned will persist and that the survival of the Kurdish people in these provinces is at stake. For this reason Pax Christie International calls upon all Member States of the United Nations, and in particular the members of the Commission on Human Rights, to take all steps possible to protect the Kurdish people against further human rights violations and to guarantee their rights as a people in Turkey, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic

9. Given the fact that the oppression of the Kurdish people's rights is being carried out simultaneously in these four countries and would seem part of a preconceived scheme to weaken, if not to wipe out, the identity of this people, Pax Christi International strongly recommends that the Commission nominate a special rapporteur on the human rights violations perpetrated against the Kurdish people as a whole, living in a contiguous area divided by the State borders of Turkey, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic.